

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 06333 152233Z

70

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SP-02 AID-05 EB-07 NSC-05 CIEP-01

TRSE-00 SS-15 STR-04 OMB-01 CEA-01 CIAE-00 COME-00

FRB-03 INR-07 NSAE-00 USIA-06 XMB-02 OPIC-03 LAB-04

SIL-01 AGR-05 SAB-01 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 L-03 PA-01

PRS-01 /095 W

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P R 152210Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5459

INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY QUITO

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 6333

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EIND, PN

SUBJECT: BANANAS: UNITED BRANDS (UB/GOP NEGOTIATIONS

REF: (A) TEGUCIGALPA 4444

(B) PANAMA 6072

(C) PANAMA 5536

1. WALLACE BOOTH, UB'S PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE, CALLED ON THE AMBASSADOR AND DCM OCTOBER 14. HE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY KEVIN CORRIGAN, UB CONSULTANT, AND BOBBY WALKER, UB'S RESIDENT REP IN PANAMA.

2. AFTER BEING APPROPRIATELY BRIEFED ON CURRENT STATUS US/GOP CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATIONS, BOOTH REPORTED THAT HIS FIRST
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PAGE 02 PANAMA 06333 152233Z

VISIT TO PANAMA AND HIS PRIMARY OBJECTIVE WAS TO INSPECT UB

OPERATIONS AND MEET WITH EMPLOYEES AND WORKERS. HE SAID HE FOUND LATTER VERY MUCH CONCERNED OVER THEIR FUTURE BECAUSE OF POSSIBLE GOP TAKEOVER UB OPERATIONS.

3. BOOTH BELIEVED THERE WAS STILL HOPE IN A NEW UB/GOP VENTURE WHERE LATTER WILL HAVE VOICE IN MANAGEMENT, MARKETING AND DISTRIBUTION. BOOTH DID NOT EXPECT DURING THIS TRIP TO MEET WITH GOP RANKING OFFICIALS WHO UNDERSTANDABLY HAD TO CATCH UP WITH THEIR WORK BACKLOG BECAUSE OF THE OCTOBER 11 REVOLUTION CELEBRATIONS. HOWEVER, HE HOPED TO BE RECEIVED BY GENERAL TORRIJOS LATE AFTERNOON AS HE (BOOTH) WAS DEPARTING OCTOBER 15.

4. MESSRS. BOOTH AND COORIGAN AGREED WITH AMBASSADOR'S OBSERVATION THAT GELSTHORP'S DEPARTURE, REF (C), WAS RATHER UNFORTUNATE AT THIS CRITICAL PHASE OF UB/GOP NEGOTIATIONS, HOWEVER, BOBBY WALKER'S PRESENCE AND CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH GENERAL TORRIJOS PROVIDED THE REQUIRED CONTINUITY CONDUCIVE TO A NEW UB/GOP RELATIONSHIP. WALKER CONFIDED THAT GENERAL TORRIJOS WANTED HIM AND GOP VICE PRES. GONZALEZ TO COME UP WITH GUIDELINES SUBJECT TO GEN. TORRIJOS/BOOTH APPROVAL AND THEN HAVE A UB/GOP TEAM FINALIZE NEW VENTURE AGREEMENT.

5. WALKER INFORMED ECON/COM COUNSELOR THIS MORNING THAT BOOTH WAS UNABLE TO MEET WITH GEN. TORRIJOS BECAUSE OF LATTER'S SUDDEN VISIT TO COSTA RICA (FBIS REPORT 2729, OCT. 15, 1975). WALKER ALSO REPORTED HE DEPARTING OCTOBER 16 FOR TWO WEEK'S VISIT TO U.S. HE EXPECTED TO ARRANGE FOR BOOTH VISIT WITH TORRIJOS BY MID-NOVEMBER, IF NOT SOONER.

6. COMMENTS: EMBASSY AGREES WITH TEGUCIGALPA'S EVALUATION OF BOOTH'S PERSONALITY, REF (A), AND HOPES THIS WILL AUGUR WELL FOR UB'S OPERATIONS IN PANAMA.
JORDEN

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